

VZCZCXRO0957
OO RUEHAG RUEHROV
DE RUEHUB #0521/01 1891320
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 071320Z JUL 08
FM USINT HAVANA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3461
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/COGARD INTELCOORDCEN WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HAVANA 000521

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/06/2013

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [CU](#)

SUBJECT: USINT HOSTS SUCCESSFUL 4TH OF JULY EVENT IN SPITE
OF OFFICIAL OBSTACLES

REF: A. HAVANA 518

[1](#)B. HAVANA 515

HAVANA 00000521 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: COM Michael E. Parmly for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: In spite of an unprecedented effort to reduce attendance by the GOC, USINT hosted a successful 4th of July reception that attracted 626 guests from civil society, the press, religious organizations and the diplomatic corps. Many civil society members from outside Havana were prevented from attending, as were virtually all of the artists, intellectuals and musicians. The GOC mounted a significant (and likely costly) island-wide effort to limit attendance at the 4th of July event, but succeeded only partially. Hats off go to the Cubans themselves who applied their customary ingenuity to slip around the GOC blockade and attend the reception. End Summary

Havana Civil Society Well Represented...

[1](#)2. (C) In the face of extraordinary efforts of state security to warn away civil society members and dissidents (ref A), all of the major figures in the dissident movement attended with the exception of Jorge Luis Garcia Perez (Antunez), who was under virtual house arrest in his home town of Placetas. Nevertheless, Antunez called to offer his regrets for not attending. Though many dissident and civil society activists attended, including a solid representation from the Damas de Blanco, almost all of them were from the Havana area. The GOC succeeded in detaining or otherwise impeding the movement of most civil society members from outside the city of Havana. Even those who were able to attend had to run a gauntlet of security in the neighborhoods and in the area around the chief of mission residence (COMR).

[1](#)3. (C) Liberal party leader Francisco Chaviano said he had been held for several hours following his detention on July 3, and strictly instructed not to attend the USINT event, but came anyway. Former 75er Roberto de Miranda and his wife reported that state security had entered their residence in Central Havana overnight and detained several visitors who had been staying with them. Though they did not yet know what had happened to these individuals, and though both are in poor health themselves, they made a point of getting to the COMR for the 4th of July event. Martha Beatriz Roque (MBR) reported that approximately 72 dissidents had been detained in all, and she had been warned by her principal state security minder not to attend. Notably, at one point she and prominent dissident Oswaldo Paya could be seen

holding a spirited discussion with Spanish Ambassador Carlos Alonso Zaldivar, no doubt concerning the EU's decision to lift its sanctions against Cuba.

...But Others Prevented from Attending

¶4. (C) While Havana-based civil society groups were fairly well represented, very few from outside Havana made it. The most notable exception was religious writer Dagoberto Valdes and his Convivencia group from Pinar del Rio. However, they had been in Havana for several days before the reception. According to dissident leaders, others who attempted to travel were detained, removed from buses, and had airplane reservations canceled.

¶5. (C) The arts and intellectual communities were very poorly represented. We heard from several artists that they had been warned away in the same manner as had occurred earlier in the week on the occasion of the Robert Rauschenberg virtual art exhibit. Prominent classical guitarist Luis Manuel Molina reported that his boss at the Havana classical music station informed him Friday afternoon that she was aware he had been invited to the 4th of July event and that he would be fired if he attended.

Unusual Efforts Made to Hold Down Attendance

¶6. (C) In addition to threatening invitees with detention or job loss if they were to attend, the GOC also closed several blocks around the COMR and would not allow anyone without diplomatic license plates to enter. Even some of USINT's LCN employees coming in to work at the event were

HAVANA 00000521 002.2 OF 002

prevented from entering the area. Fortunately, although the GOC net was impressive, it was still porous, and many individuals succeeded in slipping past the police patrols. Mostly for logistical reasons unrelated to this particular crackdown (the COMR is located far from normal public transportation routes), USINT instituted a shuttle service using USINT vehicles to transport invitees from a central point to the event and then to return them to public transportation centers after the reception ended. This arrangement probably allowed the vast majority of the civil society members who attended to avoid being caught up in the police blockade around the COMR.

¶7. COMMENT: Following the threatening MINREX statement on USINT activities (ref B), we were not too surprised to see the GOC take some sort of measures to shut down the 4th of July event. The extent of the effort was, nonetheless, noteworthy. One prominent dissident commented on the costs of having approximately 50 people involved in round the clock surveillance on each house or individual throughout the country, to say nothing of the large police presence in Havana for the event itself. To a certain extent the GOC effort succeeded. We had invited 1,800 people to the reception and expected that attendance could have reached ¶1000. However, while the GOC expended great time and effort to keep the 4th of July reception a non-event, the level of participation, especially among civil society, was impressive. The 626 who attended was only marginally fewer than the number who attended in 2007. For that success we have to thank the ingenuity of our Cuban contacts, many of whom braved genuine risks to their personal safety to come to a cocktail party. Their perseverance turned what could otherwise have been a disappointing evening into a display of respect the U.S. and what it stands for, and a victory for Cuban civil society.

PARMLY